

Godfr. Ticey Sheff^d 1795

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S E R M O N,

Preached in

The Parish Church of Dronfield,

IN THE

COUNTY OF DERBY,

On Wednesday February 25th, 1795,

Being the Day appointed for

A GENERAL FAST.

By the REV. J. RUSSELL. *R*

SHEFFIELD:

Printed at the Britannia Press, by J. NORTHALL.

1795.

SERMON

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

By the Rev. J. K. Russell

Of the Church of England

London: Printed by J. K. Russell



GEN. LIT. DEPT.

By the Rev. J. K. Russell

Of the Church of England

and of the University of London

London: Printed by J. K. Russell

1854

TO THE PUBLIC.

THE following Discourse was preached at Dronfield on the Day appointed for the late general Fast. I have been strongly solicited by my Parishioners to print it; and with this Solicitation I have at length thought proper to comply. I assure the Reader that it was not drawn up with any, even the remotest, Idea of Publication,---if it be productive of any Good, the sole End that I have in View will be fully answered.

J. RUSSELL.

DRONFIELD, *Derbyshire, March 6th*
1795.

TO THE PUBLIC.

THE following Discomfiture was presented at Boscawen on
the Day appointed for the late general Fair. I have been
strongly solicited by my Parishioners to print it, and with
this Solicitation I have at length thought proper to comply.
I assure the Reader that it was not drawn up without
the utmost Ideas of Publication. It is the production of
my Good, the sole End that I have in View. It is fully
answered.

A. RUSSELL.

Printed by D. Browne, Dublin, 1795.

A SERMON.

Preached on the late General Fast.

Psalm lviii, latter part of 10th Verse,

Doubtless there is a God that judgeth the Earth.

IT has often been a Subject of Disputation, whether any thinking Man that ever lived, did in Reality disbelieve the Existence of a Deity. As to my own Part I think it hardly possible. A very small number of men I admit, have appeared in the World in different Ages, who have *pretended* to disbelieve it; But this seems rather to have been the mere Effect of Pride, Vain-glory, Whim, or an affectation of Singularity, than their *firm Persuasion*, and even most of *these* Men have substituted the terms, Nature and Universe, which they have invested with all the properties and attributes usually ascribed to the Deity; so that in reality, this is little more than cavilling about Words. If a Man will admit that even he himself exists, or that any Thing else exists in the whole material World, which was *not* the Cause of its *own* Existence, he must necessarily recur to a great first Cause of all Things, which
called

called into Being what before was *not* in Being. For to suppose a perpetual Succession of Effects without a Cause, is the most absurd and monstrous Idea that ever entered the Mind of Man. There are indeed in a neighbouring Nation (at this moment the most miserable and wretched on the Face of this Globe) a number of Men lately sprung up, who have had the audacious Impiety to brave and defy the supreme Being himself, and even to deny his Existence. But what *are* these Men? such Monsters as never before disgraced human Nature: Persons whose Guilt is of so black a Dye; whose Crimes are of so enormous, so unparalleled a Size, that the whole human Race stands aghast at them. It may indeed be the *Wish*, for most certainly it must be the *Interest* of such men, that there may be no God to call them to a dreadful Account for their horrid Deeds. Most assuredly it would be better for them not to exist at all, than to live in never-ending Torments. But, as a judicious Writer has expressed it, the Being of a God is a Truth so little to be doubted, that it is almost the only Truth we are sure of; and such a Truth, as we meet with, in every Object, in every Occurrence, and in every Thought.

But my Text asserts, not only that there is a God, but that he Judgeth the Earth. I shall not, on the Occasion, on which we are now assembled, enter fully into the Proofs of a future State of Retribution which our natural Reason would suggest to us; but shall only beg Leave to mention one or two that offer themselves. As our gracious Creator has rendered our Bodies liable to Pain, in Order thereby to excite our constant Attention for the Cure or Removal of whatever might impair
our

our Health or endanger our Life; so the same merciful Being has made our Minds subject to painful Sensations on the Commission of Vice; that we might thereby be induced to apply the proper Remedies for healing our wounded Consciences. Now what else can be the Meaning of that secret Dissatisfaction and Uneasiness of Mind, that painful Regret and Remorse which the Sinner feels, but a Commencement, an Anticipation of the Punishment which hereafter awaits every persevering, unrepenting Transgressor of the Laws of God? on the other Hand, is not that inward Satisfaction, that secret Complacency of Mind which the pious and good Man feels, from the Consciousness of having faithfully discharged his Duty; what else can his delightful sensations be, but the Earnest, the Foretaste, the Anticipation of future Bliss?

But farther, without supposing a State of Retribution hereafter, how is it possible to reconcile the present Scene and State of Things, with any Ideas we can form of the Wisdom, the Justice, or the Goodness of God. Here we oftentimes see Vice triumphant, and Virtue persecuted and Oppressed. Particularly in a neighbouring distracted Land, during the last four Years, we have known many, very many Thousands of the most pious and devout, the most worthy, and respectable Characters in that whole Country, without Crime, or even the *Imputation* of Crime, but only that of their attachment to, and their Conscientious Profession of, our most holy Religion; a Religion, that the purest voice of Nature sanctions; that the best, the most perfect Reason fully approves; that the Wisdom of nearly Eighteen Centuries has revered and adored; and that the hand of God has a Thousand Times confirmed:

I say, we have known these devoted Victims, plundered of their Property ; their Wives and Children either massacred, or reduced to the lowest state of Poverty and Distress ; themselves dragged into the dark Cells of Dungeons, from whence they have been haled to public Execution : while the far greater Part of their ferocious and merciless Persecutors and Murderers, are at this day alive and flourishing. Now I say, without admitting a future state of Retribution, in which all these seeming Disorders shall be rectified, how is it possible not to arraign the Wisdom, the Justice and the Goodness of God.

But the words of my Text, " Doubtless there is a God that Judgeth the Earth," not only imply that there will be a State of Retribution hereafter ; but also, that during the *present* State of Things, the wise providence of God constantly directs and regulates the affairs of the World. After this beautiful order of Things was called into Being, founded on infinite Knowledge planned and regulated by infinite Goodness, ordered and directed by infinite Wisdom, and executed by infinite Power, it could not have subsisted for a single moment, if it had not been upheld by the same power that formed it. To suppose that the supreme Being, as soon as he had formed the World, would abandon it to the Whirl of blind Fate or Chance, or the fierce Passions of Men, to be disposed of at random, is a most extravagant Supposition ; it is supposing him to act with the Levity of weak Mortals. Whatever Inducement the Deity might have to create, the same must necessarily operate to superintend and preserve. Now it is not possible to conceive any other motive for his Calling intelli-
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gent Beings into Existence, than to confer on them the greatest general Good and Happiness. The Laws of Nature which he has established, he has not thought proper to suspend, but upon extraordinary Occasions. He has put no Force or Constraint on the Wills of Men. Wicked Individuals therefore may be punished, and Misery and Desolation may be the Lot of sinful States and Kingdoms: but still the general result will be, the conferring the greatest possible general Good, and the final Display of the Goodness of God. In this imperfect State indeed, we cannot clearly understand these Truths: but hereafter, when our Faculties shall be enlarged, we shall then be enabled more fully to comprehend them. The Terms, Fate, Fortune, Chance and Accident are in reality, Words without any meaning. Every Event and every Occurrence are but the wise appointment of a gracious Providence. This Truth, the voice of Reason and Nature loudly proclaims. In this Truth, all the Nations upon Earth have ever concurred: for all the Prayers and Addresses offered up to their Deities; all the Religious Services and Ceremonies which they performed; all imply the Belief of an over-ruling Providence. This Language holy Writ, in every Part of it invariably holds out. We are there told, that even Casting Lots (apparently the most fortuitous of Things) is the Disposal of the Lord: and our Saviour assures us, that a Sparrow cannot fall to the Ground without his Father, and that the very hairs of our head are all numbered. How comfortable, how delightful is this reflection? that we are not abandoned to blind Fate, or Chance, or the perverse Humours and Caprice of Men: but that there is a wise and gracious Providence, that directs and
superintends

superintends all the affairs of the World, and if no *single Individual* be so inconsiderable, as not to be the immediate Object of divine Care; States and Empires must be so in a more *peculiar* manner, in which the Fortunes of many Millions of Individuals are involved.

But here it may be alledged, if these things be so, how shall we account for those strange and horrid Events which have lately happened, and are now transacting in France? where a Set of impious Men have dared to defy the Almighty, and to spurn at his Authority: have laboured to exterminate his holy Religion; have massacred his Priests, and profaned and polluted his Temples; have trampled under Foot every Religious Principle and every moral Obligation; and under the assumed Cloak of Liberty, have established the most cruel Despotism, the most bloody Tyranny that the World has ever experienced; have committed Robberies, Plunders, and Depredations, infinitely surpassing any Thing heretofore heard of on the Face of the Earth; have Butchered in Cold Blood more than an Hundred Thousand innocent Victims, of both Sexes, and of every Age: the bare Recital of whose Crimes will fill every future Age to the end of Time with Astonishment and Horror, and yet the arms of these ferocious Monsters have been triumphant; and the Armies that have combated these Enemies of God and of the whole human race, have met with Disasters and Defeats: how are these Things reconcileable with the Idea of an all-wise and all-directing Providence?

Before I reply to this last particular, I beg leave to observe,
that,

that, though the Facts as above stated are undoubtedly true, yet our Enemies are by no means in that flourishing State in which they may be generally supposed. That though Victories and Conquests have attended their Arms *Abroad*, yet these have added Nothing to their Strength, their Property and Opulence at *Home*; but on the contrary have greatly impaired them. They seem to me like a Tree whose Branches spread far and wide, and appear Blooming and Flourishing to the Eye, but whose Trunk is decayed and rotten, and is fast approaching to its Fall. Their Government (if it deserves the name) is rash, weak, and fluctuating: Faction has rapidly succeeded Faction, as Wave succeeds Wave, itself to be soon swept away by the next ensuing one, nor is it at all probable that the present predominant Party will be of any longer Continuance than the preceding. Their Resources are nearly dried up; their Trade and Commerce are annihilated; their Manufactures destroyed, and their Agriculture neglected. The first Necessaries of Life are five times dearer, and the Means of procuring them, beyond Comparison less than in England. Their Provisions are of such a *Quality*, that the poorest Person among us would not eat them; and the *Quantity* of them is so inadequate to their consumption, that many Thousands are probably at this moment dying of Hunger. Pestilence generally treads close on the Heels of Famine, so that the three most dreadful Scourges of God, the Sword, Famine, and Pestilence are hovering over that devoted Land, and the Vial of Wrath seems ready to be poured upon them to the uttermost, unless it should please God to open their Eyes to their true Interests, and to turn their Hearts back again.

Known

Known unto God are all his Ways from all Eternity. It is not for us weak Mortals, to pretend to scrutinize into the depths of his Counsels. But without the charge of Presumption, I may be allowed to offer a Conjecture or two, why these strange Events may have been permitted. Perhaps they may have been suffered to happen, in Order to convince all Mankind, how vain, how foolish, as well as *impious* the Attempt is, for any Man, or Body of Men, to form any system of Conduct for themselves, exclusive of God, a religious Principle and moral Obligations; and that the signal Punishment now inflicting, and ready to be inflicted on those who have dared to attempt it, may serve as a Warning to every future Generation. Another Reason may be, that God frequently makes use of *one* sinful Nation, as his Agents and Instruments, to punish *another* sinful Nation, as appears from profane, as well as sacred History. Our Armies have met with Disasters! let us fairly see how the Account stands. This Nation has repeatedly experienced the gracious Interposition of divine Providence, on many trying Occasions. Our cup of National Blessings he has filled up to the Brim. We enjoy the free Exercise of our holy Religion. The Government and Constitution of our Country are by far the best and freest of any that now are, or that ever did exist on the Face of this Globe. Our Laws are mild and equitable. Our Trade and Commerce are extended over the whole Earth, to a pitch, far beyond any thing hitherto known. Our Manufactures, our Opulence and Prosperity, are the envy and admiration of all the surrounding Nations. Every Man in this happy Isle, enjoys full Security in his Person, his Property and Character.

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We hear the Tempest of War howl at a Distance, but it has not come near our shores, nor is there any probability that it ever will. Now what Returns have we made to the divine Author of all these inestimable Blessings? have we felt lively Sensations of Gratitude for them, and has our Proficiency in Virtue and Piety kept Pace with them? I fear quite the Contrary. Too many of us have been filled with ungrateful Murmurs, Repining, and Discontent. The *Forms* of Religion are indeed preserved among us; but I fear the Power and Spirit of it are nearly evaporated. Our Devotions are cold and unanimated: the service of our God is grossly neglected; and the Day particularly *appropriated* to that service is shamefully profaned. Sensuality, Luxury, and Dissipation are fashionable Vices. Intemperance, Drunkenness, and Excess overspread the Land. Profane Oaths and Curses may be heard in almost every Street and every Dwelling. If these Things *be* so, what Claims have we on the peculiar Interposition of divine Providence in our Behalf? have we not rather Reason to fear the farther Chastisements of his avenging Hand?

If we do *indeed* desire to promote the welfare of our Country, if we *really* wish effectually to interest the divine Providence in our Favour, let every one of us at once resolve to break off our Sins by Repentance, and to reform our secret Corruptions. This is the *only* Reform in our Power, and the *only* one wanting. Let every one of us say "I am fully determined, by God's assistance, that my Vices shall no longer add to the Load of national Guilt, nor contribute to sink my Country into Misery and Ruin." This would be a noble Resolution, worthy of Englishmen and of Christians. In this
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Cafe I doubt not, but the Light of God's countenance would again shine on this Land. In the midst of our national Depravity, I own indeed that there is one bright Beam of Light, that pierces through the Dark Gloom. I mean, Benevolence, and Charity and Public Spirit. Witness our numerous public Institutions, for the comfortable Accommodation of the Sick and Indigent, and private Benefactions for their Relief, which are indeed unexampled in any other Age or Nation. The liberal Contributions throughout England, for the supply of the Wants of our indigent Brethren, during this most inclement Season, is a fresh additional Proof of this. And I humbly trust, that, for the sake of this *one* pre-eminent, national Virtue, God will not withdraw his protecting hand from us; that he will not forget this Work and Labour of Love.---And Oh, may he look down with an Eye of Compassion and Mercy upon this Nation now prostrate before him, and humbly imploring his almighty Aid! may he guard and bless our gracious Sovereign, and prosper his Counsels and Endeavours for the Welfare of this Country: may he go forth with our Fleets and Armies in this most Just and Necessary War, and enable them to repel the Attempts of our Enemies, and may he, in his good Time, restore to us the Blessings of a secure and permanent Peace. Grant this O gracious God, through the Merits and Mediation of thy Dear Son.---Amen.



